

David Small (Who, What, Why)

The majority of the projects that David Small, a designer and media artist, has worked on, use computer science and typography as the medium. In addition to his work in computer science and graphic design, he has been very active in the field of digital media, consistently creating new innovative ways to use his interactive projects to engage people with information. Small's interest in digital media started when he studied at MIT's Media Lab, and he got a Ph.D. in media arts and sciences. He was focusing on digital typography and interactive design mostly and made new ways for text and information to be represented. He later made a studio called: Small Design Firm, and through it he has worked on a lot of projects and he made a lot of installations that have changed the way people interact with information. His work's main idea is that digital experiences should be just as engaging as their physical counterparts and he achieved this by combining the normal print designs that most other people have already created with technology. One example of Small Design Firm's projects was their "Chicago History Museum's Interactive Map," which used digital narrators to let visitors explore the city's history in a more immersive way. Another cool project was the "WGBH Media Library and Archives," where Small and his team made an interactive touch screen system that allowed people to look through decades of public media content. These projects represent Small's belief that typography and information design should be useful and also engaging. With Michael McKenna as the technical director, Small Design Firm is still merging design and computer science. Overall, Small has re-made for a lot of people, what the role of typography and visual storytelling takes in our digital age.

Discussing One of David Small's Works

One of David Small's most iconic pieces is his interactive text installation "Documenta11" otherwise known as the "Illuminated Manuscript," which goes against our original ideas about how we read textual material. His idea combined digital interactions with traditional book designs to create a new reading experience where the text would respond to the reader's movements. The installation had a projected text that changed as people approached it, which made it an evolving narrative space. What makes this work important is that it tries to go against the motionless nature of the rest of the world's texts. The "Illuminated Manuscript" really shows off Small's abilities in typography and computation arts. In the space he used sensors and projection mapping to make a place where words are no longer just stuck to the inflexible options on a printed page. Instead, they can become living things that change when interacted with. This project really shows off Small's bigger artistic visions when he decided to commit to re-imagining the way people can interact with information. It makes me think about the future of reading and writing, if digital media will continue to influence static concepts and objects like this in the future, and if everything will eventually have some sort of intractable digital version of itself. Another question I thought about is: could textbooks one day respond to students'

learning styles in real time? As digital and physical media are constantly emerging, projects like Small's might be hinting that the act of reading itself could change into a more immersive and participatory experience in the future. Overall, when Small merged digital tools with traditional storytelling forms, he put a new perspective on our relationship with language and information.

Bibliography

Small, David. *Documenta 11*, www.smalldesignfirm.com/documenta-11. Accessed 17 Feb. 2025.